

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – June 15, 2007

California Prepared for Fire Season

CAL FIRE is making preparations for a challenging fire season. Californians should know that the CAL FIRE is 100 percent ready to fight wildfires. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has increased fire protection spending by 21 percent since taking office and provided more than \$150 million in additional funding. In each of the last three years, the Governor's budget has allocated \$17 million a year more for emergency fire equipment. The Governor's Executive Order is making a significant difference in the state's preparedness.



In preparation for what looks to be a very challenging fire season due to extraordinarily dry conditions, CAL FIRE has coordinated its preparation efforts with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the California National Guard, the FIRESCOPE Board of Directors, and all of our contract counties (Los Angeles County, Orange County, Ventura County, Santa Barbara County, Kern County, and Marin County). In addition, pre-fire season meetings have been held with the Fire Chiefs of the City of San Diego and the City of Los Angeles.

During the recent Griffith Park and Catalina Island fires, CAL FIRE worked well with our local and military counterparts.

CAL FIRE has made ready all of its 804 statewide fire stations. CAL FIRE has a statewide workforce of 4,510 firefighters including 1,604 seasonal firefighters who are in the process of training and staffing all of the state's emergency response equipment at increased levels. An additional 450 seasonal firefighters are in the CAL FIRE workforce as a result of a contract with CDF Firefighters approved by Governor Schwarzenegger last year.

CAL FIRE operates 23 air tankers, 11 helicopters, and 14 air tactical aircraft from 13 air attack and 9 helitack bases located statewide. Aircraft can reach most fires within 20 minutes. The CAL FIRE emergency response Aviation Program is ready for deployment anywhere in the state.

Off-season aviation maintenance is on-schedule.

Readiness and safety training has been conducted for all pilots. Pre-fire season training has been completed with the California Air National Guard's helicopter resources.





The CAL FIRE Aviation Program is the best firefighting operation in the world. The recently signed Executive Order from the Governor also allows the deployment of a contracted DC-10 Supertanker on large fires, on an immediate-call basis beginning June 15. DC-10 and lead plane training is currently underway. The DC-10 is

capable of dropping 12,000 gallons of water or retardant on large fires compared to the 1,200 gallon capability of the CAL FIRE S2T Air Tankers which make air strikes with surgical precision during initial attack.



Readiness training has been conducted for all CAL FIRE inmate fire crews. CAL FIRE operates 39 Conservation Camps statewide that house over 4,300 inmates and wards. These Camps are operated in conjunction with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Through these cooperative efforts CAL FIRE operates 198 fire crews year-round. Each fire crew is typically composed of 16 crew member inmates and 1 fire captain. These crews are available to respond to all types of emergencies including wildfires, floods, search and rescue, and earthquakes.



But our biggest partnership is with homeowners who reduce the threat of wildfires by removing flammable vegetation and brush around their homes. In response to the Governor's Executive Order, CAL FIRE has added Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) inspectors to conduct defensible space inspections in high-hazard areas as extra preventative measures during this fire season.

In addition to seasonal resources and the year-round staffing authorized by the Governor's Executive Order, many permanent resources have been added in Southern California since the Fire Siege of 2003, the largest fire in California history. CAL FIRE has 147 cooperative fire agreements to provide fire

protection for local government in 35 of the state's 58 counties, in 25 cities, 31 fire districts, and 34 special districts.

CAL FIRE Riverside County has added 9 new fire stations and 9 additional



engine companies along with 165 additional personnel. The City of Riverside has added 2 new engine companies. CAL FIRE Riverside has also added an additional fire crew at the Oak Glen Camp

which is an addition of 16-20 firefighting inmate personnel. During 2007, they will add about 35 additional firefighters for four person state engine companies for the fire season.



CAL FIRE San Bernardino Unit added one new fire station with 6 new firefighters. CAL FIRE San Diego Unit has added 2 fire stations and 11 volunteer stations along with 21 new firefighters. An additional station is pending with 6 new firefighters, 21 engines, 4 rescues, and 5 water tenders were added to their equipment fleet. San Diego County

added 2 helicopters in 2 helitack facilities (El Cajon, Fallbrook) and 27 firefighting personnel.

In addition, CAL FIRE Contract Counties have added resources since 2003. Los Angeles County Fire Department added 6 stations for a total of 165 and added 290 firefighters since 2003 for a total of 4,635 today. Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) added 54 firefighters, a 2nd helicopter, and one additional hand crew. OCFA has also just recently received approval for helicopter replacements. Ventura County Fire is now operating 4 Super Huey helicopters (1 reserve) with 3 pilots.



Wildfire preparedness is not solely a state issue. Other responsible local government communities have added resources since 2003 and have prepared their personnel and communities with Community Wildfire Protection Plans. With

the adoption of 100 feet defensible space requirements by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection last year,



local and state governments have been provided with guidelines for making their communities better prepared to reduce the risk of wildfires and make California a safer place to live.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ruben Grijalva', is positioned above the printed name.

Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Director

Local Government Program

- Continuing work on training agenda for fall 2007 Chief's training
- Staff working on Schedule A video script & filming edits/outline
- Sent video proposal to Public Information Office for review and approval
- Staff continuing to receive and process current year Schedule A agreements

All Risk Program

- Completed - the "New Generation Fire Shelter Update Training" to Unit personnel from CNR and CSR.
- Completed – New Generation Fire Shelter ordering information and instructions to all Units.
- Instructing Fire Academy personnel on the New Generation Fire Shelter on 6/14
- In process – Fire Shelter training for Hdqtrs personnel.

Conservation Camp Program

- Working on Daily Rate issue
- Monitoring the progress of the DJJ contract (scheduled to be reviewed by contracts this week)

State and Federal Program

- The CNG, Cal Tran, DWR, BIA, CFPA, and CFAA renewal agreements continue in progress
- FMAG applications for Griffith Park and Island have been officially submitted